

8.

A 4

S E R M O N,

PREACHED BY

FRANCIS BURTON,

VICAR of THEDDLETHORPE ALL-SAINTS,
in the County and Diocese of LINCOLN,

U P O N

FRIDAY the 27th of FEBRUARY, 1778:

BEING, BY PROCLAMATION,

A GENERAL FAST.

Printed particularly for the Perusal of his own
PARISHIONERS.

L O N D O N :
PRINTED BY H. BALDWIN;
AND SOLD BY ROBERT SHEARDOWN, BOOKSELLER,
IN LOUTH.

ST. R. M. O. N.

RESEARCH BY



ST. R. M. O. N.

RESEARCH BY

ST. R. M. O. N.

ST. R. M. O. N.

RESEARCH BY

ST. R. M. O. N.

RESEARCH BY

ST. R. M. O. N.

RESEARCH BY

A
S E R M O N, &c.

2 CHRON. XX. 12, 13.

O our God wilt thou not judge them ? For we have no Might against this Company that cometh against us : Neither know we what to do, but our Eyes are upon Thee. And all Judah stood before the Lord with their Little Ones, their Wives, and their Children.

HOW unsteady are the ways of Man !
Even the renowned Solomon was so unthinking as to fall into Idolatry, and to forsake God in his old Age ;—whereupon it was foretold, by the Prophet Ahijah, to

A

Jeroboam

Jeroboam the Son of Nebat, (who was only a Ruler over the People who were employed in carrying Stones for Solomon's Buildings) that the God of Israel would rend the Kingdom out of the Hands of Solomon, and would give Ten Tribes unto him.—But this Separation, in the House of David, was not to be made in Solomon's Time; the Righteousness of his Father David entailed such a Blessing upon *him*, that God would not permit it in his Time, *for David his Servant's Sake.*

But when Solomon was dead, then the Distraction begun; for the twelve Tribes meeting at Shechem, the Centre of the Kingdom, to acknowledge Rehoboam, according to Custom, for their Sovereign, as rightful Successor to Solomon, the discontented Parties recalled Jeroboam out of Egypt, who had fled thither out of the Way
of

of Solomon, to this Assembly, and chose him their Speaker.—They begin with a Complaint against the former Government ; but promised to submit to Rehoboam as their King, and be his faithful Subjects, if he would promise to ease them of their Burthens which his Father Solomon had imposed upon them.—Upon this Rehoboam called his Father's Counsellors together, and said, “ How do ye advise that I may answer this “ People ?” It appeared to them that there could be but small Reason to complain against the Government of Solomon, by whose extraordinary Judgement, Arts, Sciences, and Merchandise had been so much improved ; but to those desirous of a Change, a light Cause seems sufficient : Therefore their Advice was, “ That if he would be “ rather condescending to them, and speak “ good Words unto them, then they would “ be his Servants for ever.” But he forsook

the Counsel of the old Men, and chose some of his Companions, unexperienced Men, to be of his Privy-Council, (which is a frequent Fault of young Kings) and they advised him to say unto them, “ My little Finger shall be thicker than my Father’s Loins.” Thus Rehoboam was proud and vain, and scorned to court the biggest Part of his People ; expecting Obedience unto him as an absolute Monarch ! But this blustering Language was not able to frighten them into Obedience, but made himself justly despised.—For, “ When all Israel saw that the King hearkened not unto them, the People answered the King, saying, What Portion have we in David ? neither have we Inheritance in Jesse : To your Tents, O Israel !—Now see to thine House, David.—So Israel departed unto their Tents.” Thus by the ill Advice of rash Counsellors, and the Imprudence of
I their

their Prince, there was a Breach made in the Kingdom of Israel, which never after could be made up; for we read that "Israel rebelled against the House of David unto this Day." When Rehoboam had seen his Mistake, and that he had but two Tribes out of twelve that stuck to him in the Support of his Crown and Dignity, he sent Adoram (who had the principal Care of those Tributes which the Israelites were unwilling to pay) to treat with them; with Promises, perhaps, of easing them when it was too late. "But they stoned him with Stones that he died." This Action of the rebellious Israelites was as much wrong as the Imprudence of the King of Judah had before been, in behaving so rigorously to his Subjects; for the Law of all Nations prohibits any Violence to be done to a King's Ambassador.—Thus a Civil War was actually commenced, and would have been immediately

ately attended with great Effusion of Blood, had not God prevented it, by sending She-maiah unto Rehoboam, the Son of Solomon, King of Judah and Benjamin, saying, “ Ye
 “ shall not go up nor fight against your
 “ Brethren the Children of Israel.” Thus God in Mercy prevented these two misguided Princes from shedding the Blood of his People; one of which was prompted to it by regal Pride, the other by cursed Ambition! But Rehoboam did not neglect directly to strengthen his Kingdom with Forts; while Jeroboam, to prevent the Desertion of the People of Israel, by going, as usual, to Jerusalem three Times a Year to offer Sacrifice, pretended to establish a new Religion, and set up two golden Calves, one in the North, and the other in the South of his Dominions, under which Symbols he affected to worship the Lord Jehovah. This gave Occasion to the Ministers of the Lord,
 and

and a great Number of Israelites, to leave their Houses and Possessions and come over to Judah and Jerusalem, which made a vast Addition to the Strength of Judah.

Too many and various are the Incidents that happened to the Kings of Israel and Judah for me to enumerate in this Place, but, upon the whole, it appears that the Kings of Judah gradually destroyed the Idol-Worship that Solomon, in the latter End of his Reign, had introduced, and persevered in the Worship of the true God, to the coming of our Saviour ; while the Rebels, under Jeroboam and his Successors, persevered in their Wickedness and Idolatry till they were utterly destroyed from being any more a People.

What I would particularly observe during the Succession of the Kings of Judah, is,
that

that whenever they were labouring under any Affliction, brought upon them by the chastising Hand of Providence, for any crying Wickedness they had committed, if they repented of their Errors, and turned themselves unto God, by amending their Lives, he always heard their Cry, and saved them from Destruction. As was the Case, especially, in the Time of the good King Jehosaphat, who, though he was one of the best of Princes, yet was not without some Faults, for which God thought proper to reprove him, and threaten him with all the Calamities of War, from a Combination of barbarous and foreign Powers ; “ As Moab
 “ and the Children of Ammon, and with
 “ them other besides the Ammonites.” But in Order to divert the Danger, and preserve himself and his People from Destruction, he proclaimed a Fast, and prayed for Help unto his God, saying, “ O my God wilt thou
 “ not

“ not judge them ? For we have no Might
 “ against this great Company that cometh
 “ against us : Neither know we what to
 “ do, but our Eyes are upon Thee.—And
 “ all Judah stood before the Lord, with
 “ their Little Ones, their Wives, and their
 “ Children.”

From the Text thus copiously explained,
 and the Revolt of the ten Tribes from
 the royal Standard, in the State of Israel
 considered, so parallel to the present Cata-
 strophe which has, within these few Years,
 happened amongst his Majesty's Subjects
 in North - America ; (which Rebellion
 threatens this Kingdom with almost ine-
 vitable Ruin ; either by pursuing the usual
 Ravages of War, to reduce them to their
 former Allegiance ; or by too much draining
 the Mother-Country of her necessary Forces,
 leaving it open and an easy Prey to its

watchful and inveterate Enemies) I need not mention, I think, to any sensible Person, the Occasion and Necessity of this present Meeting.—In the midst of such alarming Circumstances, our pious King, like the good Jehosaphat of old, sets himself to seek the Lord, and proclaims a Fast through all his Kingdom: Which I shall observe, in the 1st Place, to be the properest Step that can be taken in such a Situation. 2dly, I shall dwell a little upon some of the melancholy Consequences of a Civil-War.—And then endeavour to make some proper Observations from the whole, and so conclude.

Without pretending politically to demonstrate to you whether the Americans or we are wrong, I will say no more than this, there must be Faults on both Sides. It would be as bad, nay, perhaps, a worse mispending of Time, for me to disturb you,

on such a solemn Meeting as this, with these Matters, by diverting your Thoughts into a wrong Channel, than that pernicious Practice of common People disputing with one another at public Houses, upon the Subject, with all their Ale and Acrimony. One harangues about the *ruinous State of this Kingdom, and the Ingratitude of the Americans*; another, *upon the arbitrary Behaviour of the Mother-Country to her Colonies* (not considering they are all the while adding to the heavy Burthens they complain of, by mispending their Money, and wasting of their Time). However these Knots of News-paper Politicians will battle it out till late at Night, nor do they then separate with closed Debate, but blown up, with Smoke and Liquor, to such a Pitch of personal Envy and Ill-will, as to have commenced little less than a Civil War with one another. But the Disagreeableness of taking

a View of these ill-spent Hours, together with my entering into political Matters, and the Unprofitableness of the best Digest of them to you, induces me to pass on to the particular Heads of this Discourse I have proposed to speak to; the first of which is, that I am to observe that Fasting and Prayer to God are the properest Steps that can be taken in the dangerous Exigencies of War.

The Kingdoms of the Earth might have been long ago sufficiently convinced, by Experience, that there is no depending upon their own Strength; for they who rush headlong into Battle, without making the King of Heaven their Ally, have but rarely gained any Advantage, but in the End do often bring about their own Destruction:— That of Israel, which was once so well established, both by the Pureness of its Religion,

Religion, the Wisdom, Strength, and Numbers of its People, so as to be the *Glory of all the Earth*, soon dwindled down to nothing, when once they begun to forsake the Lord their God, and became Apostates to the Rock of their Salvation. But Jehosaphat, one of the Kings of Judah, (after the Community of Israel was divided) upon hearing that the Moabites, Ammonites, and others in Confederacy with them, were coming against him, publicly called the whole Nation to Acts of Penitence and Prayer, that they might obtain Help of God, and they prevailed :—For by the Ordering of divine Providence, the Enemy fell upon one another and slew one another, so that the King of Judah was left Master of the Field without striking a stroke ; for the People of Jehosaphat had nothing to do but to gather up the Spoil.

When

When Manasseh, one of the Kings also of Judah, instead of imitating the Piety of his Father Hezekiah, fell into the most detestable Idolatry, shed innocent Blood in great Abundance, and exceeded in Wickedness all the wicked Kings of Judah, God was provoked so much by his Sins, and the Sins of his Subjects, that he suffered him to be carried Captive in Chains to Babylon : Yet when this same Prince humbled himself, and in his Affliction besought the Lord his God, in Consideration of his Humility, God brought him back again to his own City Jerusalem.

Innumerable other Instances might be produced to shew the good Effects of Humiliation and Prayer, not only to the pious, but even to grievous Sinners, when they were truly penitent ; and that Nothing is so proper to have Recourse to, for any Kingdom

or Nation, when labouring under any Calamity, but I think it needless to recount any more.—Therefore I shall proceed, secondly, to particularise a few of the many melancholy Consequences attending a Civil-War.

War undoubtedly may be called one of the heavy Judgements of God, upon whatsoever People, who have brought it upon themselves by their evil Ways;—but Civil-War of all others must be the most dreadful;—for in it, we often find the Hands of the Father imbrued in the Blood of his own Children, and the Sword of the youthful Son directed against the tender Bosom of his old and affectionate Father: At least, it is a Thing unavoidable, but that People of the same Family and Kindred, of the same Principle and Religion, of the same Interest and Profession, must be guilty of the grossest Acts of Barbarity, Injustice, and Oppression to one another.

another. If to hear only of one Country, when embroiled against another, and the Invaders, as it may happen, in Possession of their Antagonists' Dominions, we paint to ourselves whole Towns laid in Ashes; the aged and infirm brought to an untimely End in their own Houses; their Goods and Possessions, which, with great Industry and Care, they had collected for themselves and Families, torn from them by lawless Miscreants; the timorous Mother and her weeping little ones torn from each others Breasts, and their Blood mixed together upon the Ground, must be painful even but to imagine: But to see and feel such great Afflictions must be more, one would think, than human Nature could stand under.—Such as these are the Horrors of all destructive War, from which Monster, Enemy to Mankind, gracious Lord in thy good Time deliver us!

I shall

I shall now endeavour to conclude with some such Reflections, as may incline us to merit the Protection of God, and answer the gracious End his Majesty seems wishful to promote by this solemn Meeting.

From what I have already said, I think your Thoughts will now be able to run before me in what I have yet to add :—Conscience, that self-instructing Monitor, will quickly tell us all, the grand Occasion of all our sufferings. The crying Sins of this Nation, and those of his Majesty's Colonies in North-America, seem to have provoked God out of Measure, and drawn down his heavy Wrath upon us and them, to our Shame and Confusion in thus letting us loose upon one another for the Punishment of our Crimes.—To this Kingdom, we may safely say, he has most visibly shewn his protecting Hand many and various Times;—

and how have we deserved his Protection? Does not Vice and all Kinds of Wickedness, as I may say, flourish and prevail?—How is the Word of God thrown by and neglected! and at what a low Ebb is Religion amongst us.—That Religion of ours, the most pure and perfect of all the World, which we have the most free and uninterrupted Use of, is now become, with many, no Religion at all.—All Exhortations from the Pulpit fail; few come constantly to Church, many never approach the Altar. What Ingratitude does this shew to our gracious God, our Saviour and Redeemer! O English Israel how art thou fallen from thy antient and well-known Glory!

All the former Favours we have received, and the Blessings of God we have long enjoyed, as a favourite chosen People, like the Jews of old, do but aggravate our Crimes,
and

and hasten forward our Destruction ; for we are undoubtedly worse than our Forefathers have been : What hinders then, if we will not repent, but God may justly cut us off from being any more a People ?

But let us not despair, God is always willing, to the last, to give Ear to the Supplications of his Servants ; and we are here met together to humble and prostrate ourselves before him, to beg Pardon for our Transgressions, and promise faithfully never to provoke him more ; if this be our sincere Resolution we may yet be safe ; God can soon confound the Designs of our Enemies, and make us victorious over them ; or, which, in my Opinion, is much more christian for us to wish, he can say to the destroying Angel, in both Armies, it is enough, stop now thy Hand, and mutually reconcile our American Brethren and us by

an adequate and immediate Peace. He never wants Means to deliver those that call upon him; we know he willeth not the Death of a Sinner, but that all should repent and inherit eternal Life. As you may read Deut. v. 20. " O that there were such an
 " Heart in them that they would fear me
 " and keep all my Commandments always,
 " that it might be well with them and with
 " their Children for ever."

Consider what has been said, &c.

F I N I S.



f
l
h
n
e
s,
h
cc.